DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 229 733 CS 007 106

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TITLE Parent Involvement in the Primary Reading Curriculum: One Approach.
PUB DATE 31 Jan 81
NOTE 26p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southwest Regional Conference of the International Reading Association (9th, San Antonio, TX, January 29-31, 1981). Some appendix material is marginally legible.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Beginning Reading; Directed Reading Activity; *Parent Participation; *Parent School Relationship; Primary Education; *Program Evaluation; Reading Aloud to Others; *Reading Attitudes; *Reading Programs; Reading Skills

ABSTRACT

The Bryan Independent School District (Texas) has implemented a primary grade parent involvement program based on a home-partnership model and a contract of cooperation between the parents and schools. By signing the contract, the parents agree to (1) listen to their child read 15 minutes three days a week; (2) read a story a day to their child; (3) three times a week, read a book or magazine of their choice for 15 minutes while their child reads something of interest; and (4) conduct the activities sent home in folders each week. At the same time, the teachers agree to assist each student in his or her acquisition of reading skills, send the folders home each week, respond to parental concerns and questions, and send home supplementary books to be used during the reading periods at home. The folders contain a sight word list, independent activities, and parent directed lessons. This package is accompanied by a weekly newsletter from the teacher that informs parents of the skills and activities that the students are engaged in that week. Both teachers and parents have responded positively to the program, and, after the first year, both groups noted that the students had developed a positive attitude toward reading. Appendixes include examples of activities in the folders, teacher responses to the parent involvement questionnaire, and parent responses to the parent questionnaire. (HOD)

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PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN THE PRIMARY READING CURRICULUM: ONE APPROACH

by

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This paper was prepared for the
Ninth Southwest Regional Conference,
International Reading Association,
San Antonio, Texas
January 31, 1981

CS 007 106

Most educators agree that a child's home environment influences the way in which he/she views reading. Stickler and Eller (1976) maintain that children are more likely to develop a positive attitude toward reading if their parents read to them and model reading behavior in their own lives. Hansen (1973) suggests that parents who encourage reading as a source of recreation and knowledge, who assist children in selecting books, and who discuss these books with their children also provide influences that promote a positive attitude toward reading. If this is the case, it would seem logical to involve parents in the reading instruction of their own children.

Types of Parent Involvement Programs

Nedler and McAfee (1979) describe four types of parent involvement programs. These include: 1) home-based programs, 2) school and center based programs, 3) parent education programs, and 4) home-school partnerships.

Home intervention programs began in the 1960s to see if education in the home would help children from low income families make and sustain educational gains. Home based programs emphasize two goals:

1. teaching parents to be better parents and family members, and
2. teaching parents to be better teachers of their own children.

In this type of program, the parents are expected to be learners. They learn how to use household items to teach their children. They learn how to talk to their children in order to help them understand the world around them. They are also taught how to be better home managers, more knowledgeable consumers, and more active family and community members.

In this type of program, teachers take on the role of educating the parents. Typically, the teacher comes to the home once a week, brings a variety of activities for parents and child, discusses and demonstrates their use, and listens and responds to parental concerns.

The second type of parent involvement program described by Nedler and McAfee is the school or center based program. This type of parent involvement can take place anywhere that children go to school: public schools, daycare centers, parent cooperative nursery schools.

The major goals of the school based parent involvement programs are:

1. teaching parents to understand and support their children's school, and
2. teaching parents to be better teachers of their own children.

In this type of program, parents may participate in activities such as:

1. being teacher assistants or aides in the classroom
2. grading papers

3. making bulletin boards
4. fixing up the playground
5. raising money
6. making costumes

or just about anything within the classroom or school environment.

A third type of parent involvement program is parent education. Parent education aims at helping parents of early childhood students become better informed about child rearing and family life as it affects their child's upbringing. Parent education can take place just about anywhere: public and private schools, churches, and the college classroom.

Typically, parent education programs utilize the format of a group meeting involving a presentation by a speaker or a film, followed by discussions or questions and answers. Topics may include such areas as child growth and development, child guidance, discipline, home management and family life.

The Bryan Independent School District, Bryan, Texas, has implemented a parent involvement program based on the "home-partnership" model described by Nedler and McAfee (1978). In addition to the model, a contract between parents and the school was added as suggested by Godwin (1977). The goals of the program are:

1. to develop active cooperation and continuity between each student's home and his/her classroom.
2. to provide opportunities for each child to rein-

force reading skills at home as well as in the classroom.

3. to enhance each parent's skills as a teacher of his/her child.
4. to develop in parents a positive attitude about their role as a teacher of their child, and
5. to improve each student's attitude about reading.

The Primary I Parent Involvement Program

The Primary I Parent Involvement Program began as a pilot study in three first grade classes. The parents and teachers of these classes met in September to discuss the district's reading curriculum and to initiate the parent involvement program. At this time, both teachers and parents signed a contract of cooperation.

By signing this contract, parents agreed to:

1. listen to their child read 15 minutes three days during each week.
2. read a story a day to their child.
3. read a book or magazine of their choice while their child reads something of interest three times a week for 15 minutes.
4. conduct the activities sent home in the "Apple Folders" each week.

On the same contract, the teachers agreed to:

1. assist each student in his/her acquisition of reading skills through the reading curriculum.

2. send "Apple Folders" home each week.
3. respond to parental concerns and questions that are delivered by students.
4. send home supplementary books which can be used during the reading periods at home.

The Apple Folder

At the end of each week, the students took the Apple Folder home. These folders contained a sight word list, independent activities, and parent directed lessons. The sight word list contained words that students would encounter during the following week or that they needed to review in order to master. Independent activities included word puzzles, following directions sheets, and generally fun-type activities that students could do independently. Parent-directed lessons included activities suggested in the basal reader which were rewritten for the parent. (See Appendix I) An example of this type of activity is:

> "Ask your child to think of a television star that he/she likes. Have him/her tell you a story about this star. Write his/her words on a piece of paper as he/she speaks. Read the story orally then allow your child to try to read the story back to you."

Activities like those mentioned above were accompanied by a weekly newsletter from the teacher that informed parents of the skills and activities that the students were engaged in that week. In addition to this weekly communication

between parents and teachers, parents were asked to meet individually with the classroom teacher in January to discuss their child's reading progress.

In May, parents, teachers, and administrators met again in order to evaluate the program. Parents were generally favorable in their comments. They indicated that they enjoyed participating in the program, spent more time with their child than they normally would without the structure of the program, they stressed that the contract assisted them in being responsible and continuous in their educational interaction with their child. A major student gain noted by both parents and teachers during the first year was that students developed a positive attitude toward reading which they related to the program.

Based on this meeting, the Bryan schools decided to continue the Primary I Parent Involvement Program on a voluntary basis during the next year. Twenty of the twenty-five first grade teachers participated. At the end of the year, a teacher and a parent questionnaire was administered in order to determine the program's value and success.

Evaluation of the 1979-80 Parent Involvement Program

Sixteen teachers and 42 parents responded to the questionnaire (See Appendix II). The results of these questionnaires are provided below.

The response to the teacher questionnaire indicated that the majority of the teachers felt their relationship with

parents was strengthened through their participation in the program. Sixty-nine percent of the teachers felt parents had a more positive attitude toward the classroom. An almost identical percent (66%) felt that the program facilitated a positive interaction with parents. The teachers also felt that the program was useful to students in two ways: the program helped the students progress through reading (63%), and aided students in developing a positive attitude about reading (75%). Seventy-five percent of the teachers felt that the program was worth the time and effort they put into it.

Parents in response to the parent questionnaire, also indicated that the program had a positive effect upon their relationship with the school, their ability to work with their children, and their children's ability to perform in school. When asked if they enjoyed participating in the program, 89% said that they found the program enjoyable. Seventy-six percent of the parents said that they would like to engage in another contractual agreement with the school.

Conclusion

While further study is needed to show conclusively that changes in attitudes of parents and teachers are a result of the Primary I Parent Involvement Program the preliminary data are encouraging. These data suggest that teachers are willing to go beyond the realm of their job description to gather and assimilate materials for the benefit of their students' progress and that parents are willing to work cooperatively with

the schools in order to help their children.

In summary this program reveals that parents and teachers are capable of successfully becoming partners in the education of their children. While an empirical study is warranted, the results of the program seem to indicate that parents and teachers working together can enhance children's attitude toward reading.

References

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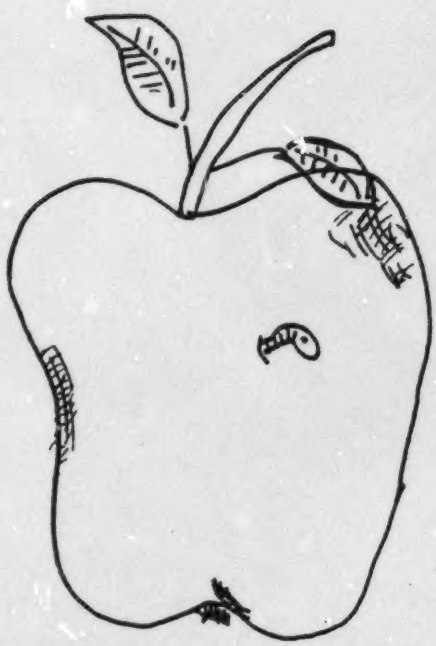
Hansen, Harlan S. "The Home Literacy Environment - A Follow-up Report," Elementary English, Vol. 50 (January, 1973), pp. 97-98, 122.

Nedler, Shari E. and McAfee, Oralie D. Working with Parents: Guidelines for Early Childhood and Elementary Teachers. Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1979, pp. 187-215.

Strickler, Darryl and Eller, William. "Reading: Attitudes and Interests" in Reading: Foundations and Instructional Strategies edited by Rose Lamb and Richard Arnold. Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1976, pp. 448-482.

Examples of Activities in the Apple Folder



(Example of a letter to the parent.)

October 20, 1978

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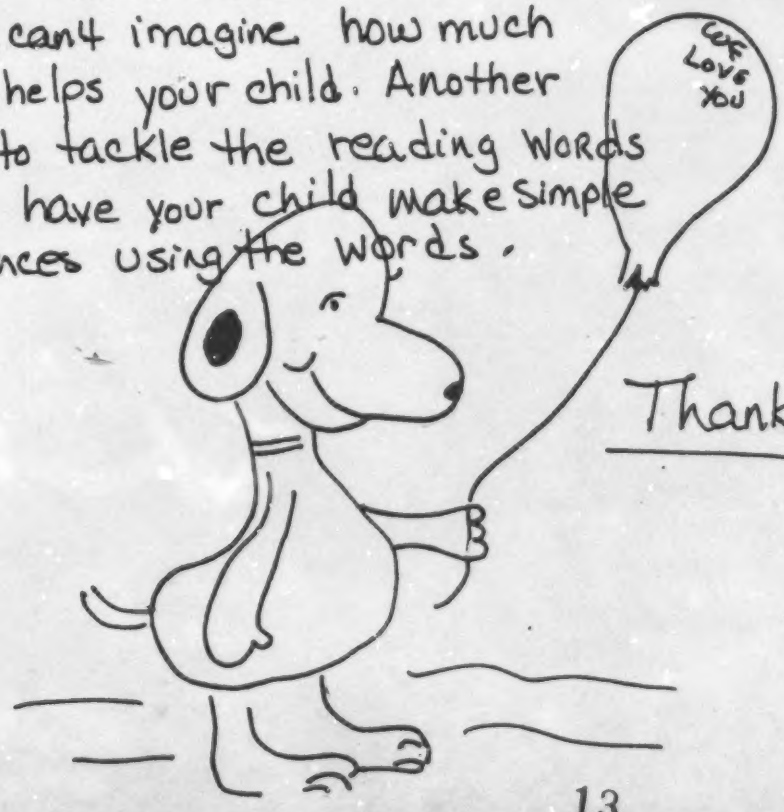
Dear Parents,

Our first week has been a success. The children love taking their folders home. They enjoy the time you have spent with them.

This past week we studied the vowel "a" – long and short sounds. As you have noticed, we are now trying to sound out simple words eg. căt, căn, băg, ănd, hăt. Also: māde, cāke, hāy, and rāke

Next week we will do the vowel "e", long and short sounds.

Please, please keep reviewing the new and review words for reading. You can't imagine how much this helps your child. Another way to tackle the reading words is to have your child make simple sentences using the words.



Thanks.

Reading List - Week of Oct. 23

New Word -

ride

Review Words -

David	Daddy
Mark	Mother
and	see
Patty	
Janet	
Tina	

Lesson 62

Talk to your child about television shows that do and do not tell a story. Have him name as many shows as he can that do tell a story. Have him tell a story from his favorite show.

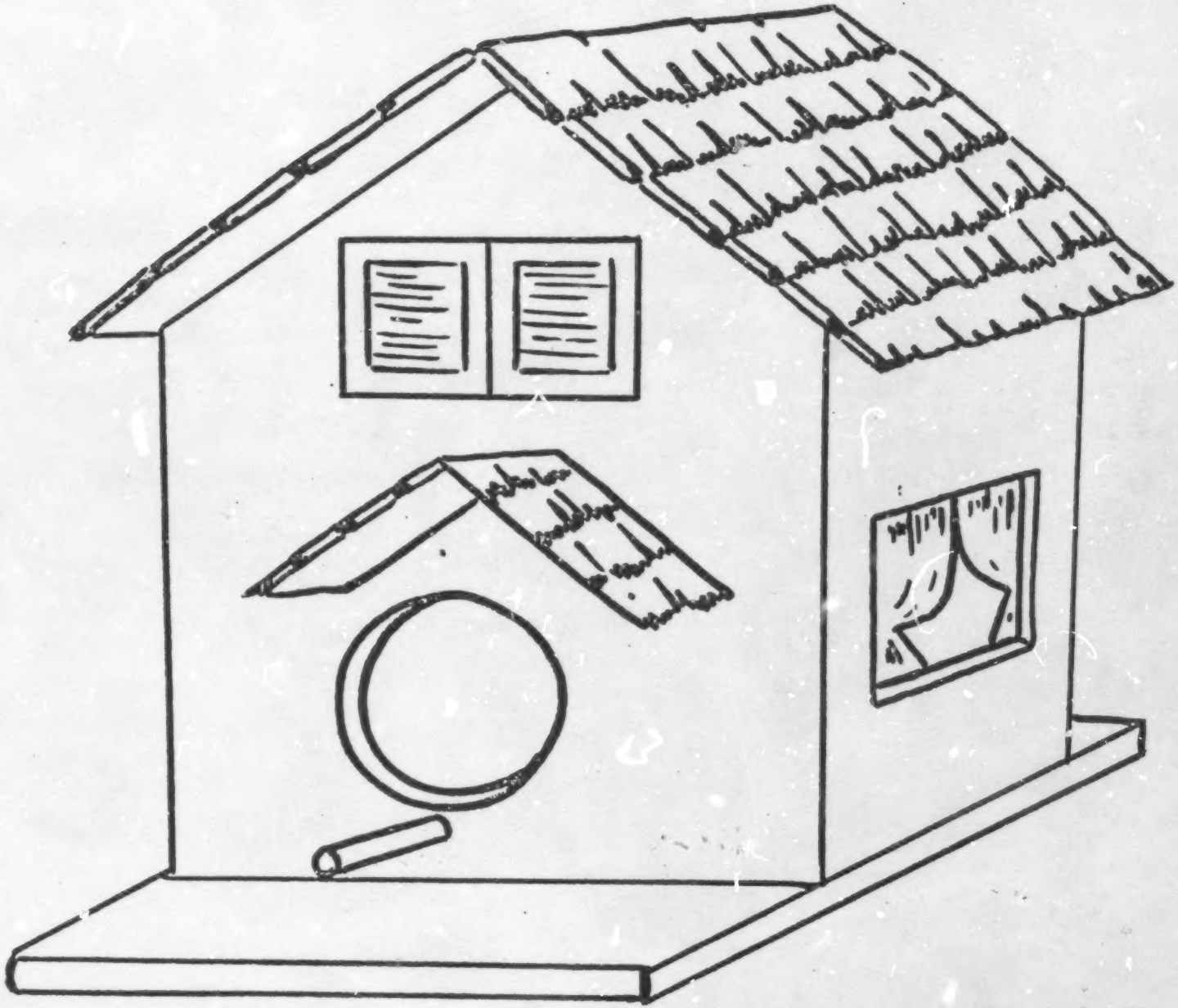
F.R. Lesson 63

Print this sentence on a piece of paper.
(ruo nwot saw gniog ot evah a lleps nwod)
Explain to your child that the words are spelled backward. Have him print the words the way they should be spelled.

Ask your child to think of some object that he sees every day. That could be the "hero" of a story — a mail box or a railroad crossing gate. Have him tell a story about this object.

F.R. Lesson 59

Play a word game with your child. Say a word to him and ask him to give the first word that comes to mind.
example:
cover (pot, book, bed)
page (book, read)
paint (house, red, picture)
pony (ride, train)



Draw A Bird On His House

BIRD FAMILY AND RESIDENCE

Teacher Response to Parent Involvement Opinnaire

1. In your opinion, to what extent has the Parent-Involvement Program been useful in the following areas:

   a. in the facilitation of positive interaction with parents.

VERY USEFUL		SOMEWHAT USEFUL		NOT USEFUL
5	4	3	2	1
13%	53%	21%	13%	0%

Comments:

1. Parents are more informed about content. (mentioned 2xs)
2. Parents have made favorable comments about the program. (mentioned 2 xs)
3. There is more feedback and concern from parents.
4. This is the most important goal.
5. The program provides a common-ground for working with parents.
6. It is useful <u>when</u> parents look at the letter and activities.

   b. in helping parents have a more positive attitude toward the classroom.

VERY USEFUL		SOMEWHAT USEFUL		NOT USEFUL
5	4	3	2	1
19%	50%	31%	0%	0%

Comments:

1. Parents have a better understanding of the skills in the classroom and activities to work on at home. (mentioned 2xs)
2. Parents feel like we care and are trying to inspire the children.
3. Some parents have expressed appreciation.
4. An informed parent is a happy parent.
5. There were good responses on the parent-evaluation sheet.

   c. in helping students progress through reading.

VERY USEFUL		SOMEWHAT USEFUL		NOT USEFUL
5	4	3	2	1
19%	44%	31%	6%	0%

Comments:

1. Parents have not followed through on working with children at home. (mentioned 2xs)
2. Most students are being helped and have progressed more than they did without help.
3. There has been more child/parent communication and home study.
4. The program has helped about 1/3 of the participants.

d. in helping students develop a positive attitude about reading.

VERY USEFUL		SOMEWHAT USEFUL		NOT USEFUL
5	4	3	2	1
31%	44%	25%	0%	0%

Comments:

1. Children enjoy the activities in the folder. (mentioned 2xs)
2. Children have exhibited a more positive attitude about school in general.
3. Some students have not been helped at all.
4. The program helps motivate students to try something new.
5. Students become discouraged when parents won't respond or throw papers away --
6. Children boast about how much work they do at home.

2. Do you feel that the time and effort needed to organize, gather, and assimulate the materials in the weekly folder, is worth the results? Explain.

WORTH IT	NOT WORTH IT	DON'T KNOW
75%	20%	7%

Comments:

Worth it:

1. There has been improvement in some areas. (mentioned 3xs)
2. We modified our program. (mentioned 2xs)
3. If one child has been helped it is worth it. (mentioned 2xs)
4. Yes, now that we cut down our materials.
5. Yes. However some students who could really benefit have not been involved at home.

6. The students are motivated.
7. Yes, once we have a time saving routine.
8. Parents enjoy planned and organized material.
9. It helped me organize.
10. Parents are better able to see what problems children have.
11. It's worth it if parents would cooperate and use the materials.
12. It's worth it with our class this year but I don't know about next year.

Not Worth it:

1. Too time consuming. (mentioned 2xs)
2. This year it is not worth it.
3. We don't spend enough time on important things.

Don't Know:

1. I don't know if the results are positive. If they are it's worth it.

3. In your opinion, what are some of the positive gains attributed to the program?

PARENT GAINS

1. Parents are more aware of content taught in the classroom. (5xs)
2. Better parent-child communication. (4xs)
3. Parents are enthusiastic about the program. (3xs)
4. A good way for teachers to organize and share their ideas. (2xs)
5. Parents appreciate the program. (2xs)
6. Parents are taught ways that they can help children at home. (2xs)

TEACHER GAINS

1. Better parent-teacher communication. (7xs)
2. Better communication between primary teachers. (2xs)
3. Good way for children to reinforce skills learned in the classroom. (2xs)
4. Materials provided are helpful. (2xs)
5. Teachers can better observe students' strengths and weaknesses. (2xs)

STUDENT GAINS

1. Students are enthusiastic about program. (3xs)
2. Students learn responsibility. (2xs)
3. Students gain a positive attitude about school in general.
4. Every child is included.
5. Children progress in reading.
6. Students have a better knowledge of vocabulary words.
7. Children feel positive about program.

OTHER

1. Newsletter.
2. Contract with parents.

4. If you could change or modify anything about the program, what would it be?

Comments:

1. It needs to be individualized to fit the classroom needs. (3xs)
2. Delete all activities except letter and word list and an occasional fun sheet.
3. Delete the contract but have an early parent meeting.
4. More time available for organization of materials.
5. Change way of doing word list.
6. I disagree with rewarding for bringing the folder back on Monday.
7. I would like more variety.
8. Include math activities.
9. Send something home with more reinforcement value.

5. Would you recommend that this program be continued next year?

YES	NO
94%	6%

Comments:

1. Yes, with modification to fit the needs of the classroom. (2xs)
2. Not with this class but yes, with another class.
3. Time is too hard to find. (No)

Summary:

In general, MOST first grade teachers who responded to the opinionnaire, felt the program was valuable. However, a general response indicated that teachers wanted a more individualized approach to their folders based on the needs of their classroom.

6. I feel that the home-school contract is an effective educational arrangement.

extremely effective	62.2%
very effective	23.7%
moderately effective	7.0%
not very effective	4.3%
not at all effective	2.8%

7. We are interested in engaging in contractual arrangements with the school in the future.

very interested	50.8%
interested	25.1%
moderately interested	14.0%
mildly interested	5.3%
not interested	4.8%

8. Because I was involved in the program, I worked more with my child than I ordinarily would.

much more	20.1%
more	52.4%
same amount	25.0%
less	0 %
much less	2.5%

9. I feel that my child's attitudes about reading will be better because I have worked with him/her.

much better	71.4%
better	23.9%
the same	4.7%
worse	0 %
much worse	0 %

I would be interested in contract programs with the school until my child is through this grade.

Grade	Total Number
0	2
PI	7
PII	9
PIII	10
4th	43
5th	18
6th	16
above	37

PARENT INVOLVEMENT - PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Overall, I enjoyed participating in the Primary I Parent Involvement Program.

very enjoyable	67.2%
enjoyable	21.3%
moderately enjoyable	9.0%
marginally enjoyable	1.0%
not at all enjoyable	1.5%

2. I have enjoyed the folders that have been sent home each week.

very enjoyable	76.6%
enjoyable	16.4%
moderately enjoyable	4.8%
marginally enjoyable	1.1%
not at all enjoyable	1.1%

3. I feel that the folders, evaluation sheets, and letters sent back and forth between home and school are good ways to communicate together.

excellent communication	72.3%
very good communication	10.7%
good communication	4.4%
adequate communication	2.6%
poor communication	0 %

4. I feel that I was given adequate information in order to do my part in the program.

excellent	63.8%
very good	22.4%
good	9.1%
not very good	3.1%
poor	1.6%

5. I feel that a contract with the school to better teach my child to read can be effective.

extremely effective	56.6%
very effective	25.9%
moderately effective	10.4%
not very effective	4.4%
not at all effective	2.7%

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I would be interested in participating in contracts in other areas of the curriculum.

Subject	Total Number
Math	109
Science	65
Writing	78
Social Studies	79
Art	35

(More than one answer could be marked.)